

## **When Everything Fails** **Ruth 1:1-5 (NKJV)**

1 Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion--Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. 3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

This past week I read an excellent book by John Piper Christ and the Coronavirus.

I recommend it to everyone. I don't plan to use it today for the message although much of what he wrote are simple timeless truths that I have preached for almost 50 years. But it helped put them into perspective for me so I decided that I would also address this subject.

God's people are not new to trials for from the fall of man life has been filled with strife and struggle, sickness and death. It is not so much a question of what we will do if they come our way but when they come our way.

I will admit that I was sheltered from many of these things in my early childhood. But since I have gotten older it is different.

When I pick up the obituary today most of the people are younger than me, that doesn't look too good from my perspective.

Now we have this virus. But there is always a virus. I remember listening to a doctor talk back in the first part of March about how that at this time of year about 300 or more people die of the flu each and every day in the USA. And I thought I don't even get a flu shot, although in January I was diagnosed with the flu.

We see today just how afraid people are of death. For over a month we have shut ourselves up inside our houses and hardly ever go out.

And we would not even think of shaking someone's hand today.

But Naomi and Elimelech were in a similar situation. Oh it wasn't a virus but it was a famine, something we know nothing about.

They packed up their two boys and moved to Moab about 50 miles away to make a new start.

But the problem is that most of the time we cannot run away from what is happening to us.

Within 10 years Elimelech and Naomi's two sons were dead any way.

And in that day there was not support for a Jewish woman living in a foreign land.

So she decides to go back to Bethlehem for she hears that the famine is over.

What would have happened if they would have stayed in the land of promise, in Judah, in Bethlehem?

No one but God can be sure. But it could not of been much worse that the state she was in now.

So let us look at this, and learn from others.

- I. Elimelech and Naomi lost their confidence in God.
  - A. Bethlehem was in the land of promise.
    1. The land was their families for ever.
    2. They were right where God wanted them.
    3. But they go to Moab.
      - a. A very sinful place where idols were worshiped and the people practiced child sacrifice.
      - b. And it was here that they found wives for their sons.
      - c. I know that they may not have planed to be there so long.
      - d. But we must never find ourselves in the wrong place.
      - e. Like Lot they were more concerned about the physical than the spiritual.
        - (1) Jesus said what profit is there in gaining the whole world and losing ones own soul.
  - B. Like Abraham who in a similar time of trial disobeyed God and left the land of promise and went to Egypt.
    1. The land that turned Abraham into a liar.
    2. The land where he lost his confidence in God and devised a scheme that might have ended in the defilement of Sarah his wife.
  - C. Some who call themselves Christian have questioned God in all that is happening.
    1. It is not unusual but it is still a sign of spiritual weakness if not a sign that they never did trust God at all.
    2. John Piper starts out his book by saying that his feet are fixed solidly upon a rock and he invites his readers to join him there.
    3. That is not a popular place today.
    4. Gov Guomo of New York in referring to the decrease of cases of the virus in New York, said last Monday, "God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that," he stressed. "A lot of pain and suffering did that." Gov Cuomo 4/13/20

5. Now I don't know that God did and didn't do, but I think he was saying that God was not involved.
6. And so goes our nation.
7. If a preacher is interviewed, he will be asked why is God doing this.
8. But if someone was to come up with a miracle cure very few would think to give God the credit.
9. God is there as the world's punching bag. Well God isn't a punching bag.

II. Naomi became a bitter person who blamed God.

- A. Ruth 1:13 (NKJV) 13 . . . No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"
- B. Ruth 1:20 (NKJV) 20 But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.
- C. I want you to know in all of this that Naomi might have turned away from God but God was working in her life to bring her back to Himself.

III. But Naomi found her way back

- A. It may have been the faith of Ruth that encouraged her heart.
- B. All that had happened to her brought her a greater blessing than she could have ever dreamed.
- C. Her story of trial and loss would have been lost in the multitude had God not stepped in and gave her a blessing.
- D. But what if God had not stepped in.
  1. I remember the day my mother went to the hospital for the last time.
  2. She usually made 2 or 3 visits a year there.
  3. But this time was different, she could not breathe, she had emphysema.
  4. The whole family was there we were very worried that mom would not make it this time.
  5. I will never forget as her pastor came into her room and said, "Are you going to be spending Thanksgiving at the Father's house this year?"
  6. What a concept. I knew it but my closeness to her would not allow me to go there.
  7. But it was true.
  8. We wanted her to be spending Thanksgiving here even though she would struggle for each breath.

9. But when he said that about spending Thanksgiving in the Father's house my spirits lifted.
10. For if the Lord did not raise her up once again from this sick bed, it wasn't the worst thing that could happen.
11. The worst thing would be to pass out of this life without Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Fear and dread are on every hand today.

The plan is not to cheat death, but rather to know what is behind death's door and know that it is a Savior who died on the cross for our sins and forgives all those who repent and put their trust in Him.

My mother did not spend that Thanksgiving in the Father's house nor even the next one but the following one as my family gathered at our house my mother was in her Father's house having a better time than us.